

Written Assignment Rubric – HL and SL (first examinations 2013)

<p>Criterion A: Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does the student show how their understanding of cultural and contextual elements was developed through the interactive oral? <p>Note: The word limit for the reflective statement is 300-400 words. If the word limit is exceeded, 1 mark will be deducted.</p>	<p>0 does not reach standard</p>	<p>1 Reflection on the interactive oral shows superficial development of the student's understanding of cultural and contextual elements.</p>	<p>2 Reflection on the interactive oral shows some development of the student's understanding of cultural and contextual elements.</p>	<p>3 Reflection on the interactive oral shows development of the student's understanding of cultural and contextual elements.</p>
<p>Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effectively has the student used the topic and the essay to show knowledge and understanding of the chosen work? 	<p>does not reach standard</p>	<p>1-2 The essay shows some knowledge but little understanding of the work used for the assignment.</p>	<p>3-4 The essay shows knowledge and understanding of, and some insight into, the work used for the assignment.</p>	<p>5-6 The essay shows detailed knowledge and understanding of, and perceptive insight into, the work used for the assignment.</p>
<p>Criterion C: Appreciation of the writer's choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does the student appreciate how the writer's choices of <u>language</u>, <u>structure</u>, <u>technique</u> and <u>style shape meaning</u>? 	<p>does not reach standard</p>	<p>1-2 There is some mention, but little appreciation, of the ways in which language, structure, technique and style shape meaning.</p>	<p>3-4 There is adequate appreciation of the ways in which language, structure, technique and style shape meaning.</p>	<p>5-6 There is excellent appreciation of the ways in which language, structure, technique and style shape meaning.</p>

<p>Criterion D: Organization and development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effectively have the ideas been organized, and how well are references to the works integrated into the development of the ideas? <p>Note: The word limit for the essay is 1,200-1,500 words. If the word limit is exceeded, 2 marks will be deducted.</p>	<p>0 does not reach standard</p>	<p>1 There is some attempt to organize ideas, but little use of examples from the works used.</p>	<p>2 Ideas are superficially organized and developed, with some integrated examples from the works used.</p>	<p>3 Ideas are adequately organized and developed, with appropriately integrated examples from the works used.</p>	<p>4 Ideas are effectively organized and developed, with well-integrated examples from the works used.</p>	<p>5 Ideas are persuasively organized and developed, with effectively integrated examples from the works used.</p>
<p>Criterion E: Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How clear, varied and accurate is the language? How appropriate is the choice of register, style and terminology? ("Register" refers, in this context, to the student's use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the task.) 	<p>does not reach standard</p>	<p>Language is rarely clear and appropriate; there are many errors in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction, and little sense of register and style.</p>	<p>Language is sometimes clear and carefully chosen; grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction are fairly accurate, although errors and inconsistencies are apparent; the register and style are to some extent appropriate to the task.</p>	<p>Language is clear and carefully chosen, with an adequate degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction despite some lapses; register and style are mostly appropriate to the task.</p>	<p>Language is clear and carefully chosen, with a good degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are consistently appropriate to the task.</p>	<p>Language is very clear, effective, carefully chosen and precise, with a high degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are effective and appropriate to the task.</p>

Written Assignment
Tips



class discussion, and more formally in regular oral commentaries.

These do not have to be restricted to Part 2 texts. Just as candidates are expected to perform their own experiments in the sciences, so they ought to be undertaking their own analyses of what they read in literature class. While modelling (by the teacher, the critics, and the text book writers) has its place, it hurts the candidate if it becomes the core of a literature course. In the end, it is the candidate's own understanding, not the retention of the understandings of others that is being examined – not only in the oral commentary, but in all assessment components of the course.

Higher level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20	21 - 25

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Most of the literary works chosen for study and assessment in this part of the syllabus were appropriate to the task. Works both new and well-trying comprised the appropriate selection of the three Part 1 works although in a few cases syllabuses have mistakenly included a work originally written in English. Generally the choices were valid and appropriate, and sometimes bold and provocative.

Some schools, however, are presenting their candidates with texts which can present difficulties. These may range widely given different school populations, but the attempts to write successfully about Camus's *The Outsider*, for example, often falter. Misdirected essays, such as the treatment of existentialism in 1500 words with some allusion to the literary work, are likely doomed to fail in terms of the criteria. This particular work along with others are often and rightfully fascinating to candidates at this level; they might be more usefully included in Part 4 where the emphasis is on oral work and where discussions and Individual Oral Presentations would provide ample opportunity for incrementally developed understanding and continual refinement.

Titles are crucially important to success in the assessment of Part 1, and some candidates produced strong Written Assignments, showing the effect of thoughtfully constructed Supervised Writing prompts. The point of inserting this step into the process leading to the essay was to provide candidates with precise direction in writing about literary aspects of the work, not examinations of underlying context or philosophy. When this step was well-handled, essays often succeeded. Titles such as "Symbolism, characterization and co-existence" or "To what extent did Creon and Antigone live up to the expectations of men and women at that time?" tended to divert the candidate's attention from close and well-grounded attention to the writer's choices and the effects of these into large and tenuous explorations. Other Written Assignments may well have originated with good prompts, but devolved too easily into re-descriptions of plot and character. Candidates need good models and practice to succeed in this exercise.

Finally, literary terms for critical features of texts and references to such movements as “realism” and “expressionism” seemed in the minds of candidates to stand for completely fixed and self-evident meanings. Definition of terms or other indications that references are completely understood need to appear in the essays as they allude to the particular text under discussion.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A (Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement): The nature of this expectation seemed not to be understood entirely by teachers directing candidates in this activity. That should be remedied with experience and as more samples become available. However, there is a clearly pointed question in the Subject Guide that, if responded to, should produce Reflective Statements that can do well in this criterion: “how was your understanding of the cultural and contextual considerations of the work developed through the interactive oral?” Whether the candidate is a presenter of the particular Interactive Oral or a listener, it should be possible, in 300 to 400 words, for the candidate to describe in a straightforward and supported way an enhanced grasp of the context (the author’s biography, setting, place in a literary tradition, historical events, reception of the work) and the culture (linguistic and social background, ethnicity and the like, both of the author and the time and place of the work itself).

The Interactive Oral and Reflective Statement need to be seen as partners in grounding the candidate’s sense of the work in these matters, rather than as a preliminary critical study of the literary features or an abstract of the Written Assignment. Timing of these two preliminaries is up to the teacher, but they should precede the next two steps of Supervised Writing and the Written Assignment.

The examiner needs to see in the Reflective Statement evidence of a widened or deepened sense of matters of time and place touching on both author and text, even though these aspects may or may not appear explicitly in the subsequent work of the essay. In many cases, candidates offered superficial generalizations: “society was patriarchal,” “the play is grounded in realism and subtleties,” “people conversed in an informal way in that time.” Such assertions unsupported by any firm evidence or research are not useful. Retelling the plot, describing characters, pointing out symbols, expressing personal views of the texts or critiquing the work of classmates are not the proper material for the Reflective Statement, though much of this was included in the work submitted in this session.

Criterion B (Knowledge and understanding): Performance here ranged from superficial to perceptive, as is the case across all of the assessment components. With one work to explore, candidates were usually able to indicate some grasp of what content the plays, fiction or poetry included. ‘Understanding’ involves more: subtext, the nature of actions and interactions, the apparent and implied nature of characters and the like. Here, a certain number of candidates offered limited evidence that they had considered more than events, characters or “messages.” Paraphrase and plot summary tend to characterize these weaker offerings.

When particular titles are pursued, the candidate needs to evince some evolved or probing thinking about the subject. Teachers need to be sure that when candidates develop a potential Written Assignment from a particular writing prompt that they understand the topic. A candidate writing about music in *Death and the Maiden* without mentioning Schubert or the title of the play is not likely to achieve high marks.

Elements in *A Doll's House* asserted to be 'symbols' must be accompanied by a demonstration of why that judgment is made.

Criterion C (Appreciation of the writer's choices): Unlike the reasonably satisfactory performance on average in Criterion B, the candidate outcomes in C ranged from almost no address of authorial choice to some excellent work. In some ways, the very nature of the task, 'Written Assignment,' is defined by this criterion. The task is a critical and literary one in the narrowest sense, so examiners are looking for assessment of what choices a writer has made to deliver the material, how those are deployed and to what effect.

Here the weaker performances might indeed "mention" some literary strategies (choices in diction, pace, plot elaborated by subplots, techniques of characterization) but do not go on to show "appreciation" of how these worked and what they meant to the whole work. One examiner summarized the performance in this criterion as follows: *"In this process candidates had the most difficulty in determining how the writer's method related to the text's meaning. Often this aspect was virtually ignored; conversely, other candidates strained to show some relationship that was clearly superficial or simply misguided."*

write
a
literary
analysis
of
author's
specific
choices

Clearly candidates cannot do this sort of analysis without a good deal of guidance and practice throughout the course.

Finally, in this criterion, candidates often failed to make their chosen examples work to their advantage, simply citing their presence without exploring their use and significance.

Criterion D (Organization and Development): It should be carefully noted that there is a preliminary statement in this descriptor that addresses the word count. "The word limit for the essay is 1200-1500 words. If the word limit is exceeded, 2 marks will be deducted." Please note that the same rule applies to the Reflective Statement where the penalty is 1 mark. These penalties were applied by examiners this session. (The word count includes all quoted material from the original text[s]). Attempts to subvert the word limit by including the supporting text for assertions in footnotes is not permitted.

word
count

In terms of organizing the material candidates are presenting, examiners were on the whole satisfied that there was a least some plan for structuring the argument, although these patterns ranged from fairly basic and choppy to very coherent, fluent presentations that were easy to follow. Where candidates tend to fall down is in the use of cited materials, where overlong portions of the original text are included, where quotations are poorly embedded or inserted without any rationale or interpretation.

Additionally, candidates sometimes make very poor use of their introductory remarks, falling into formulas that merely state that a certain feature is found in the work and that it is important or fascinating. Paraphrasing, too, -- or the lack thereof -- is a feature that makes delivery of ideas either effective or obscure, and a clear sense of the rhetorical value of this structural device is too often absent in these essays.

Criterion E (Language): On the whole, most candidates in this course are able to convey their ideas in a reasonably competent way. That said, there is often the implied expectation that examiners will overlook careless proofreading, imprecise diction and slips in register and style.

Avoid

While on the one hand, evaluation does not tend in the direction of penalizing for occasional lapses in spelling, grammar or punctuation, frequent incorrect usage is, in fact, penalized and holds candidates back from higher marks when, with some care, they could gain marks in this descriptor.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Although many schools approached the new demands for assessment in this part of the syllabus with seamless success, there is a clear need for a review of the Subject Guide with careful attention to the nature of each step in this four-step process of writing the assignment.

The foundational stages (Interactive Oral and Reflective Statement) need to be seen as the first half of a process, providing candidates with a secure sense of the context in which the particular work has been generated and that it continues to reflect. Two additional suggestions for the Interactive Oral bear on the personal experience of the candidate, asking about difficulties and connections between the work and the candidate's experience. It is probably best to use the suggestion about literary technique as one related to literary history so as not to divert the focus from the central question of the Interactive Oral.

Note N.B. Understandably, the requirement to submit to the examiner the Reflective Statement on the same work as the focus text of the Written Assignment appears to imply that the second must exhibit obvious links to the first. Because the Reflective Statement addresses one area of knowing a work, and the Written Assignment another, there is no requirement that context and culture be explicitly discussed in the latter. What is hoped is that the solid grounding in the wider sense of the work will usefully inform the candidate's approach to the essay.

The third and fourth steps of the process aim, beginning with the Supervised Writing, to steer the candidate in a productive direction when producing the essay (the Written Assignment), which should treat in some depth a feature in one of the three studied texts.

The prompts provided by the teacher for Supervised Writing should be both sharply focused on literary features and wide enough to allow some latitude for individual approaches to the prompt. Beyond the Supervised Writing, the teacher needs to look at the first draft of the Written Assignment to be sure that the candidate is headed in a productive direction. Examiners will not be surprised to see topics such as "The effect of the narrative voice," or "The handling of stanzaic structure" or "The use of stage directions" treated in the same literary work but with an individually chosen critical angle and evidence in support of the particular candidate's argument.

Although the final editing of the submitted assignment is entirely in the candidate's own hands, every encouragement should be given to care in devising the structure of the argument and the use of the language, with a final proofreading before submission of the work.

Further comments

→ NOW

A checklist follows that may help in solving the most common problems encountered this session; insuring that all of them are addressed may provide the assistance teachers have requested about the demands of the exercise.

1. Check and double check that the *works* chosen for study in Part 1 are (a) listed on the PLT and (b) are written originally in a language other than English.

2. Assess the reading skills and sophistication of your class groups and select works whose content and style are both accessible and engaging for the majority, not just the very talented.

③ Work with candidates to ensure that they have a solid working knowledge of literary terms such as 'exposition' or 'lexical field' or literary movements such as 'Romanticism' or 'Theatre of the Absurd.'

4. Make available to candidates and discuss the central question that must be addressed in the Reflective Statement:

"How my sense of the cultural and contextual considerations of the work has evolved through this Interactive Oral."

5. Practise writing reflective statements in response to other oral presentations such as those that might be delivered as IOPs in Part 4 work.

6. Assess when Interactive Orals are most fruitfully delivered to advantage candidates. (Work on authorial biography as well as the author's geographical and historical position, including literary history, and events in the larger world can be useful in advance of reading the work. The process of reading the work may then be enhanced by discussions of aspects within the work such as linguistic and political culture, social norms and expectations, and other aspects of the work's setting.)

7. Provide Supervised Writing prompts that point candidates in directions that encourage, not philosophical, sociological or anthropological studies, but explorations of how the writer has chosen to invent and present an artistic approach to human thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Only with this latter kind of focus can candidates do well in Criterion C.

⑧ Model for candidates the way a literary essay evolves from a prompt such as "Analyze the way the writer advances plot evolution with the use of a minor character," or "Show how the playwright uses one or more dramatic moments to produce comic relief in an otherwise serious play" or "Examine the recurring motif of weather change in the work of the poet."

⑨ Show candidates how paraphrase and re-description differ from critical analysis with examples of both, and with writing exercises that demand they construct examples of these in order to see the difference.

10. Ensure that candidates know the precise word limits on the Reflective Statement and the Written Assignment as designated in the *Subject Guide* and that there are penalties for exceeding them, even by one word.

Standard level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20	21 - 25